

REMARKS

The status of the application is as follows. Claims 1-7 were presented for prosecution and stand rejected. Namely, claims 1-5 and 7 are rejected under 35 USC 102(e) by Kida et al., U.S. Patent 6,313,540 ("Kida"). Claim 6 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) over Kida in view of Saran et al. (U.S. Publication No. 2002/0187634). Claim 1 has been amended herein. No new matter is believed added.

The drawings were objected to because allegedly it is not clear that reference numeral 4 refers to a layer. Applicants traverse this objection and submit that the specification states that reference numeral 4 refers to "an intermetal dielectric," and not a "layer." Given that the dielectric material resides between the metal layers, Applicants submit that it is clear that the dielectric is layered between the metal layers and therefore, the drawings do not lack clarity.

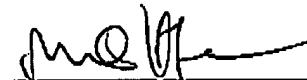
Note that applicants have amended claim 1 to include the feature "wherein each intermediate metal layer is divided into a plurality of separated segments that form t-shaped cross-sections with the via lines." This feature is shown in Figure 3.

Applicants respectfully submit that amended claim 1 and its dependent claims are not anticipated because the cited art fails to teach each and every feature of the invention. For instance, amended claim 1 recites "...a plurality of intermediate metal layers ... wherein each intermediate metal layer is divided into a plurality of separated segments that form t-shaped cross-sections with the via lines." Neither Kida nor Saran teach such an arrangement.

Accordingly, because the prior art fails to teach each and every feature of claim 1, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1, and the claims that depend therefrom, are in

condition for allowance. If the Examiner believes that anything further is necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Michael F. Hoffman
Reg. No. 40,019

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Hoffman, Warnick & D'Alessandro LLC
Three E-Comm Square
Albany, NY 12207
(518) 449-0044 - Telephone
(518) 449-0047 - Facsimile

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5